

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON WORLD HABITAT DAY 2021

4 October 2021

On this World Habitat Day, cities and towns across the globe are facing – and fighting – the dual crises of COVID-19 and climate change. Home to 4.5 billion people today, they are projected to grow by almost 50 per cent by 2050.

By mid-century, over 1.6 billion urban residents may have to survive through average summertime highs of 35 degrees Celsius.

This year's theme – 'Accelerating Urban Action for a Carbon-Free World' – highlights how cities and towns are at the core of climate action to keep the 1.5 degrees goal within reach.

Three-quarters of the infrastructure that will exist in 2050 has yet to be built. Economic recovery plans offer a generational opportunity to put climate action, renewable energy, and sustainable development at the heart of cities' strategies and policies.

City leadership in using green materials and constructing energy-efficient, resilient buildings powered by renewable energy is essential to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. The benefits are enormous: less pollution and climate risk, more jobs, and better health and well-being.

As populations grow in emerging economies, demand for transport, which accounts for nearly 20 per cent of global carbon emissions, is multiplying. Cities are working to ensure that this demand is met by zero-emission vehicles and public transit. We need a global moratorium on internal combustion engines by 2040 at the latest to underpin these efforts.

On World Habitat Day, let us work together to harness the transformative potential of sustainable urban action for the benefit of our planet and all people.